



Enjoying Literature:

An Introduction to Young Adult Literature and English Classics in High School

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05/06/2020

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Abstract

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The use of literature in language teaching has been a controversial issue for several decades. Some of the reasons for said disregard of literature are the belief that literature is too complicated for learners and that young learners are not usually interested in reading. Nevertheless, in the last 30 years, research has focused on literature as a powerful resource for the English as a Foreign Language classroom, mainly for its linguistic, cultural, and personal values. Although most English curriculums favour simplified adaptations of famous classics, some advocate for the teaching of current popular books, which tend to have a better response amongst teenagers. These books are often found under the same genre: Young Adult Literature (YAL). By resorting to YAL and literature in education as main theoretical framework, the aim of this dissertation is to design a didactic unit based on a popular Young Adult novel, *A Study in Charlotte* by Brittany Cavallaro (2017), in order to (1) promote reading amongst young adult learners of English, (2) promote the use of YAL as an adequate reading choice, and (3) prove the possibility of using YAL as introduction to literary classics.

Keywords: Literature in Education, Young Adult Literature, English Classics, Brittany Cavallaro, Sherlock Holmes

Resum

Gaudint de la Literatura: Una Introducció a la Novel·la Juvenils i als Clàssics Anglesos a l'Institut

L'ús de la literatura per l'ensenyament d'un idioma ha estat un tema controvertit les darreres dècades, alguns motius essent la creença que la literatura és massa complicada pels estudiants i que aquests no acostumen a interessar-se per la lectura. No obstant, en els darrers 30 anys, la recerca s'ha centrat en la literatura com a recurs important per l'ensenyament de l'anglès com a llengua estrangera, principalment degut a la versatilitat de coneixement que ofereix, tant lingüístic com cultural o personal. Tot i que la gran majoria de currículums d'anglès afavoreixen l'ús de clàssics adaptats, n'hi ha alguns que opten per l'ensenyament de llibres actuals i populars, els quals acostumen a tenir una millor resposta entre els adolescents. Aquests llibres normalment pertanyen a la categoria de Literatura Juvenil (LJ). Utilitzant la LJ i la literatura en l'educació com a marcs teòrics principals, l'objectiu d'aquesta dissertació és dissenyar una unitat didàctica basada en una novel·la juvenil popular, *A Study in Charlotte* de Brittany Cavallaro (2017), per tal de (1) promoure la lectura entre els adolescents que aprenen anglès, (2) promoure l'ús de la LJ com a lectura escolar adequada, i (3) demostrar que és possible utilitzar la LJ per introduir els clàssics de la literatura.

Paraules clau: Literatura en l'Educació, Literatura Juvenil, Clàssics Anglesos, Brittany Cavallaro, Sherlock Holmes

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1. Introduction

The use of literature in the language teaching classroom has been a controversial issue for several decades. Some of the reasons for the disregard of literature in language education are first, the belief that literature is too complicated for learners, and second, that young learners are not usually interested in reading (Erkaya, 2005; Gentile & McMillan, 1980). Nevertheless, in the last 30 years, research has focused on literature as a powerful resource for the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, mainly for its linguistic, cultural, and personal values (Yilma, 2012). It is for this reason that the main aim of this project is to study the multiple benefits the implementation of literature can have in a language classroom and to offer an example of a literary didactic unit to implement with high school students.

This issue was brought to my mind a few days after the start of the second part of my practicum in Col·legi Episcopal, a high school in Lleida. It was observed that the high school had started using an online program to promote reading in English amongst its students from fourth of ESO to the second year of baccalaureate. The program is called Fiction Express (Boolino, n.d.), and it consists of a webpage where chapters of different books are uploaded weekly, which students can read and then vote on what will happen next, creating an interesting and interactive role between reader and author. Nevertheless, although at first it was believed to be the solution to most reading problems in the English classroom, teachers soon realized that students felt no motivation towards this reading program, despite its innovative methodology. Some of the program's problems were, according to the students, that the topics of the different books available were not interesting enough and that the reading activities were extremely easy, a simple ten-question test, which they could answer without necessarily having read the chapter. Coincidentally, these are some of the most common problems found in recent literature programs in other high schools (Beach et al., 2016).

Despite its increase in popularity, the implementation of literature in the English classroom still raises some major doubts amongst teachers. One of the most recurrent assumptions concerning the use of literature in the EFL classroom is the kind of literature that should be taught. Generally, most English curriculums favour simplified adaptations or rewritings of particular classics written by famous authors like William Shakespeare or Mary Shelley. Nevertheless, some teachers advocate for the teaching of less known but modern and popular books, which tend to have a better response and academic outcomes amongst teenagers (Sivapalan et al., 2008). These books can usually be found under the same genre: Young Adult Literature (YAL).

According to Carlsen (1980), as cited in Vander Staay's (1992), YAL is "literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective" (p. 48). Other common characteristics of YAL are novels of moderate length, first-person narrator, and topics concerning recurrent issues of that life stage. These qualities of YAL are extremely popular amongst teenage and young adult readers, and subsequently, in English classrooms with students in that age range (Bucher & Hinton, 2014).

By resorting to YAL and traditional literature in education as main theoretical framework, the aim of this dissertation is to design a didactic unit based on a popular Young Adult (YA) novel in order to promote reading as a positive and engaging activity for English learners and introduce them to the classics of the language. The novel selected for this project is *A Study in Charlotte* by Brittany Cavallaro (2017). This novel is the perfect example of a YA detective novel, as the protagonists are teenagers, it is of moderate length, uses a first-person narrator and most topics presented are familiar to teenagers, such as friendship and family relationships. Moreover, it can also be used to introduce some classics of English literature, as it is presented as a divergent sequel to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classics of Sherlock Holmes, in which Holmes's and Watson's descendants are now the protagonists in modern United States of America. Thus, this novel seems the perfect choice to please teenage readers as well as introduce them to English classics of literature.

This dissertation is divided into the following sections. First, there will be a brief introduction to the school and group where the project would have been implemented. Second, the framework used to design the didactic unit will include (1) the reasoning behind teenagers' problematic relationship with reading; (2) an overview of the different uses of literature in education; and finally, (3) the importance of YAL as an effective reading choice for young adult learners. Next, an innovative proposal involving the use of literature in class will be presented and justified. Unfortunately, as it has been impossible to implement this project due to national health issues, there will be no results or discussion. Nevertheless, the possible usefulness and effectiveness of the didactic unit will be discussed in the conclusions and the didactic unit is included as an appendix. These sections will help complete the triple aim of this project, which is (1) to promote reading amongst young adult learners of English, (2) to promote the use of YAL as an adequate reading choice in high schools, and (3) to prove the possibility of using YAL as introduction to the classics of literature. In conclusion, I hope this dissertation helps give evidence of the importance of YAL as an English reading and learning resource, both of the language and its classics, worthy of attention in current English curriculums.

2. Context

2.1. The School

The educative centre where this innovative proposal on literature would have been implemented is Col·legi Episcopal, a semi-private high school in Lleida. Episcopal is an educative centre funded by the Catholic Church that offers services from kindergarten to baccalaureate and professional development, and they take pride in educating their students from infancy to adulthood. Although a vast majority of its students come from an affluent background, there are also scholarships or government-funded students studying in Episcopal free of charge. Thus, there is a great variety of identities amongst the students, which is usually celebrated by the centre and integration is encouraged.

Episcopal was built in 1958 out of social necessity. At that time, Lleida had multiple schools for female students, but not for males. It was then that a group of parents, together with the Church, decided to build a new school so that boys from Lleida and other cities as far as Andorra la Vella could attend. Thus, Episcopal first started as a boarding school where students could live in the dormitories in front of the school's building and go home after the school year or during the holidays. Since then, there have been many changes. Mainly, Episcopal is now a co-educational school, catering to both male and female students, and offers more than just primary school education, as it offers from kindergarten services, which are located where the old dormitories were, up to baccalaureate and professional development, depending on the student's choice (Col·legi Episcopal, 2019).

Episcopal is driven by the ideal of providing students with the necessary tools to maximize their potential, both academic and personal. It is for this reason that, since 2008, the centre has divided its English students into two groups: advanced and standard. These groups are meant to cater for the students' diversity so that no student is left behind or is stopped from progressing. Moreover, these groups are dynamic, in the sense that a student can be transferred from one group to the other depending on their performance during the evaluation tasks, which motivates them to work hard to improve their proficiency. Finally, so as to broaden students' exposure to English, there are multiple programs in use where students can meet other non-native English learners, mainly through Erasmus +, and they also offer the opportunity to pursue a baccalaureate in English through Batxibac, a program through which students receive the same education and diploma as if they had studied baccalaureate in the United States.

2.2. The Class

The present didactic proposal was intended for second baccalaureate students. Out of the five main educative baccalaureate lines, which are the technologic, the scientific, the social, the humanistic and the artistic line, the students in this group belong to a combination of all lines, predominantly from the artistic and technologic. The group is formed by 19 students, eight of which are males and 11 females, and they are between 17 and 18 years old. The English level of this group varies according to each student. However, as they belong to one of the three advanced groups in baccalaureate, they have an alleged B2 taking into account the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

As for the students' behaviour, most of them performed without problems in class and did not create many conflicts, except for the usual talking amongst themselves. Nevertheless, an aspect to highlight from this group would be their eagerness to learn new vocabulary and their need to receive and obtain exact instructions and answers. Hence the selection of a detective YA novel as their reading text, since their need to get the right answer will probably make them want to read the novel in order to discover the culprit.

2.3. The Problem Observed

Although Episcopal has multiple programs to promote and improve the learning of English, English literature is often neglected in these programs. Last year, Episcopal started using Fiction Express (Boolino, n.d.), which is a webpage where students have weekly access to new chapters from three different English novels, each with a different proficiency level, which they must read and then vote on what will happen in the next chapter, making them co-authors of the novel they are reading. Despite the success it has had in other countries, teachers in Episcopal do not seem to have it in high regard, as it has not helped improve their students' relationship with literature, which is an issue they wanted to address.

A feature to highlight from my observations of this program is the students' lack of motivation to read. In the sessions I observed, students were simply asked to read the chapter at home and then answer a ten-question test on said chapter, which they were able to answer without fully reading it, and after reading the whole book they would take an exam. It was then evident that students had no real interaction with literature except for it being a boring task leading to an exam. For most students, reading had become a true or false activity, in which they read a test and then scanned the chapter until they found the correct answers, without actually reading or enjoying the text. Thus, I thought of designing a literary didactic unit that would help improve their experience with literature.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Do Teenagers Enjoy Reading?

One of the most recurrent problems when introducing literature to English Language Teaching (ELT) is that teenagers, most of our students, do not enjoy reading. This dislike has been present in education and society for many decades, as expressed by Gentile and McMillan in their article "Why Won't Teenagers Read?" (1980), as cited in Reed's book *Classics to Comics: A Parent's Guide to Books for Teens and Preteens* (1988). In this article, Gentile and McMillan claimed that there were nine main reasons for young people to dislike reading and, despite it being more than four decades old, these reasons are still relevant and can be applied to nowadays teenagers and their reading habits. Some of the most relevant reasons for this project are (Reed, 1988, pp. 15-17):

- Many adolescents associate reading with ridicule, failure, or school tasks rather than something enjoyable, mainly due to the fact that they are only exposed to literature as an evaluative activity.
- Many prefer experiencing over reading about the experience, as it is more exciting, motivating, physical, and offers social interaction.
- Many are incapable of sitting for prolonged periods of time, which is required in order to read a novel, as adolescence is a period of great physical activity.
- Many teenagers prefer reading about themselves and relatable issues to their lives; however, most literature programs encourage reading classics, which they feel quite distant to their own reality.
- Many young people demand entertainment, as they have easy and constant access to it through their phones, but are faced with literary classics, which they often consider boring.
- Many grow up in an environment where reading is not a priority or even available, and therefore do not build a positive relationship with literature.
- Reading can and is considered antisocial by many teenagers, as it tends to be an individual task which often requires isolation in order to focus.

Although there are multiple reasons why teenagers do not enjoy reading, Reed (1988) claims they can always be solved and teenagers can become avid readers. Some of her suggested solutions are to expose them to literature from an early age and finding the right reading materials for them, as one of the most common problems is that people do not like reading simply because they have not found the right book. However, those are factors high school teachers cannot always control, especially the early exposure to literature. Therefore, Reed (1988) encourages transforming reading into a positive and

exciting experience so that our learners discover joy in reading and forget about the ridicule or assessment, which is often one of the first deterrents for teenage readers.

3.2. Literature in Education

Literature is one of the greatest sources of information and examples there can be in ELT. Moreover, literary texts can offer excellent examples of language, as they can be used for the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and even pragmatics, and they can present different styles, registers, and even jargons of the language. Furthermore, literature does not only imply learning the language, but rather everything that surrounds it, be it culture, traditions of the present or the past, and even current issues, either political or social. Consequently, literature is considered a reliable tool to learn English and about the world that surrounds us. Nevertheless, there have been some detractors of the use of literature in ELT from the moment it was first introduced.

3.2.1. Historical background

That literature is an essential part of language and language an essential part of literature cannot be denied. It is precisely due to this bond that literature has been often been used as a tool for language learning, both for native and non-native learners (Beach et al., 2016). One of the most common uses of literature in ELT is to serve as a recollection of examples of the language, which started with the grammar-translation method.

One of the methods explained in the subject *Aprenentatge i Ensenyament de les Llengües Estrangeres* was the grammar-translation method. The grammar-translation method, popular in the XIX century, used literary texts in the target language as good examples of language use and “grammatical rules” (Duff & Maley, 1990, p. 3). Nevertheless, one of the main characteristics of this teaching method was its focus on form, that is to say, on the grammatical rules and vocabulary present in the text, rather than the literary content. Although the use of literature became highly popular thanks to this method, once the method became old-fashioned and obsolete, the use of literary texts in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom disappeared with it (Agustín-Llach, 2007).

During most of the XX century, literary texts retained the believed characteristic of being representative of the old tradition and therefore were mostly overlooked (Sivapalan et al., 2008). Moreover, with the rise of the communicative method in the 80s, literature lost importance as it was not considered “either to have a communicative function nor to be an authentic example of language use” (Agustín-Llach, 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, literature was, and still is, considered “complex and inaccessible for the foreign language learner” (Sivapalan et al., 2008, p. 29), which hastened its disappearance from ELT methods.

Nonetheless, in the last decades, the interest in literature as a language learning tool has risen remarkably (Duff & Maley, 1990). A reason for it could be the realization that literature can be an authentic example of language use and an effective communicative activity, again, extremely sought after in the rise of the communicative approach in ELT. An example of an ESL syllabus using literature as a beneficial tool is the Malaysian ELT syllabus (Sivapalan et al., 2008), where English literature is taught as a separate subject and is considered an essential component for language proficiency.

3.2.2. Different Methodologies

Throughout the years, many different methodologies have risen in order to introduce literature to ELT. Some of these methodologies are literature circles or book clubs, together with intensive or extensive reading. In Catalonia, there is the *Impuls a la Lectura* (ILEC) program, which mainly focuses on promoting reading in Catalan and Spanish across all educational years.

Although literature circles and book clubs can be considered similar methodologies, as they attempt to introduce literature through discussions, there are some key differences to take into account when choosing a methodology to follow. Literature circles are based on the creation of small groups in which each participant has a specific role to follow when reading the text, such as the summarizer or the figurative language finder. On the contrary, book clubs aim to mimic a more organic and interactive methodology, in which students mainly have to read the text and then comment it as a whole, without specific roles or a correct answer (Harmon & Wood, 2015).

As for intensive and extensive reading, each approach has advantages and disadvantages. The most significant difference is that intensive reading focuses on short texts, usually read in class, and is meant to improve students' vocabulary and grammar abilities and to help them develop reading skills (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). On the other hand, extensive reading is characterised for individual and silent reading of longer texts such as novels, teachers serving as guides rather than instructors, and the final goal not being assessment but rather "pleasure, information, and general understanding" (Day, 2015, p. 295).

Conclusively, this dissertation has chosen the methodology and approach that were more appropriate for its objectives. These are the book club methodology, so as to present literature as a rewarding, interactive activity and not a task, and the extensive reading approach so as to reflect the reading process from real life.

3.2.3.Reasons for the Use of Literature

During one of the modules of the subject *Complements per a la Formació de Llengües Estrangeres*, we debunked most myths concerning the problems of implementing literature in the ESL classroom and learnt about its multiple benefits. In this section, the conclusions reached in the subject will be expanded together with the recent literature on the topic, which mainly focuses on language proficiency as main argument when defending literature in ELT (Yilma, 2012). Nevertheless, there is a divergence amongst scholars concerning their subsequent arguments to defend literature in ELT.

Carter and Long (1991) and Akyel and Yalçın (1990) coincide in their justifications for implementing literature in ELT. First, they claim it can be used as a Language Model, as it depicts varied and creative uses of the target language. Second, it can be used as a Personal Growth Model, as it can broaden learners' understanding of societies' values and morals around the world. Finally, it can be used as a Cultural Model, as it can transmit the importance of understanding and respecting cultures different from one's own. Although they offer similar arguments, Akyel and Yalcin (1990) present some problematic text choices, as they mostly focus on American and British literary classics, which as will be discussed in the following section, does not always benefit the learners.

Agustín-Llach (2007) defends three main criteria to justify the use of literature as a language learning tool. First, she defends the linguistic criterion, as literature provides learners with "genuine, authentic samples of language" (p. 9) belonging to different styles and registers, which can help them learn about the social function of language. Second, she defends the methodological criterion, which refers to the multiple interpretations and opinions that may surge from a book, thus prompting a meaningful and motivating interaction amongst the text, the learners and the teachers. Finally, Agustín-Llach (2007) defends the motivational criterion, in which learners feel motivated to read the text as it "shows the real feelings of the writer" (p. 10), thus they feel excited to access their personal experience and relate it to their own.

Moreover, literature is considered a rich and valuable source of input, especially important in input-poor countries such as Spain. Furthermore, it is more accessible and affordable than other practices that help boost the language proficiency, i.e. studying abroad. As for literature using a complex language not understandable by learners, authors like Agustín-Llach (2007) reject this belief by claiming that literature uses common language with a "high concentration of linguistic features like metaphors, similes, [...] etc"(p. 9). Finally, numerous researchers claim that most vocabulary is learnt through extensive reading

rather than instruction (Coady, 1997; Krashen, 1898) and that literature enables more effective learning of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, and not just improvement of reading comprehension (Erkaya, 2005).

Conclusively, the use of literature in ESL teaching has increased its popularity over the last decades and there are numerous reasons to justify it. Namely, it can be used as an authentic example of the different functions of language and it can help learners' personal development through the exposure to different cultures and people, which tends to improve motivation.

3.3. Young Adult Literature Specifically

One of the biggest problems when introducing literature to ELT, aside from the believed language complexity, is that students do not like the proposed text and consequently do not enjoy reading it (Ganakumaran et al., 2003). Often, texts selected for ELT focus on classics of literature, considered higher representatives of the language, often being referred to as "Literature", opposite to popular texts, often referred to as "literature" (Guimarães, 2008). Nevertheless, despite being considered higher representatives, classics are often considered distant and boring by students, thus not motivating enough to read and consequently, not beneficial. Nowadays, many researchers argue in favour of more popular genres, such as YAL, to be used in ELT as they tend to motivate and engage the learner to read, thus actually benefiting from the text (Konstam, 2014).

YAL, which was introduced in *Complements per a la Formació de Llengües Estrangeres* as a valuable and positive literary genre for ELT, is a fairly recent genre mainly popular amongst teenagers, high school teachers' target audience. Due to its recent rise of popularity, numerous studies have been conducted to determine its importance, to the extent of claiming its benefits in ELT. Herz and Gallo (2005) claim that YAL connects with its readers as it deals with real problems that are central to their lives, represents characters similar to themselves, presents themes they find interesting and that it "helps teenagers in their search for understanding the complex world of today" (p. xvi). Moreover, it is thanks to this connection that teenage readers feel more motivated to read, as evidenced in Sivapalan et al.'s (2008). Additionally, YAL is not just restricted to one literary genre but rather can be present in all of them, such as romance, horror, or comedy, offering teenage readers a broad selection from where to choose a book.

Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, YAL is often considered a lesser genre of literature when compared to the classics. However, most of YAL's predecessors are considered classics belonging to the Bildungsroman genre. Bildungsromans, which translates to 'a

novel of formation', were novels that narrated someone's journey from childhood to adulthood describing all the obstacles they encountered, like many current YA novels. Bildungsromans became extremely popular in the XIX century, where many popular classic titles are found, like *Emma* by Jane Austen (1815) and *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (1859). Furthermore, many YA novels share some key characteristics with literary classics, rendering them the perfect modern tool, which learners consider interesting and relatable, to teach a classic, which learners consider boring and old-fashioned. Many examples of these connections can be found in *From Hinton to Hamlet* (Herz & Gallo, 2005), where they promote the use of current popular novels to motivate students to read and at the same time learn about classics.

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation will be the promotion of literature in the English classroom and the learning of a classic through a YA novel. The novel selected for these purposes is *A Study in Charlotte* by Brittany Cavallaro (2017). This novel is based on the premise that Sherlock Holmes and John Watson were real people who solved crimes in the XIX century, and that their descendants, Charlotte Holmes and James Watson, are now attending a boarding school in America where a murder is committed and they must find the culprit before they are declared guilty. This novel seems the perfect text for teenage learners, as it has teenage high school characters, just like they are, deals with themes such as friendship and relationships, which they like, and has the solving of a mystery as conducting thread, which has been found to motivate readers to continue reading (Sivapalan et al., 2008). Moreover, through this motivating novel we could present a brief introduction to a highly-valued classic of English literature, Sherlock Holmes. It is for these reasons that *A Study in Charlotte* (2017) was chosen for the didactic unit.

4. Innovation Proposal

4.1. Aims

The main purpose of this innovation proposal is to promote the reading of English texts amongst high school English learners through the use of a methodology not based on the assessment of reading comprehension activities, but rather mimicking a reader's natural reading process. English literature is a subject that is often neglected, if not omitted, from most high school's foreign language curriculums. Researchers have claimed different reasons for the avoidance of literature in education, the main ones being the lack of time to devote to literature and its alleged lack of importance to improve one's proficiency in English (Agustín-Llach, 2007). All in all, most reasons depart from the idea that a teacher

should focus their teaching time on improving students' grammar and vocabulary skills, displacing literature in the EFL classroom to a secondary position, despite it being one of the basic competencies stated in the Catalan foreign language curriculum.

During the practicum period, it was noted that English literature was almost absent from the high school's teaching plan and that the programs meant to engage students with English literature were failing to achieve their goals. Hence, it was decided to introduce a new program to enhance students' motivation to read English novels by distancing it as much as possible from its predecessors. The main features of this program are the use of a popular and contemporary novel, without forgetting literary English classics, and the creation of a methodology similar to a book club, in order to debate what has been read and not just answer some true or false questions. Therefore, a didactic unit was designed based on group discussions and focusing on the novel *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro, 2017), which would meet the three aims of this dissertation: (1) promote reading amongst young adult learners of English, (2) promote the use of YAL as an adequate reading choice, and (3) prove the possibility of using YAL as introduction to literary classics.

4.2. Timing

Timing is an essential factor to consider when designing a didactic unit, together with the content one intends to teach. The contents of this proposal were focused on promoting English literature amongst high school students, which is often regarded negatively by teenage learners for various reasons explained in the previous section. Hence, it was decided that this literary proposal would only be implemented in the classroom once a week, so as to not overwhelm our students by devoting every English language session during two to three weeks to an activity they do not enjoy yet. Moreover, the extended but proportional exposure to literature has been reported to have positive effects on students' reading attitude, comprehension, and vocabulary (Shu-Chu et al., 2013).

This literary proposal was designed to be implemented for a period of eight sessions of one hour each. Nevertheless, this timing is tentative, as it may change depending on the teacher's opinions, the students' ability to read, as they might need more time to read each chapter, or even their willingness to discuss the book in the classroom, as the teacher might consider more important to allow the students to communicate than to finish the project in the estimated number of sessions. Each session would be devoted to a specific part of the unit, starting with the introduction to the classic. The first two sessions would be an introduction to the Sherlock Holmes classics and the contemporary *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro, 2017). The following five sessions would be devoted to the actual

reading and discussion of the book, working with two or three chapters per week, depending on their length. Finally, the last session would be devoted to discussing and writing their final thoughts on the novel.

4.3. Instruments

In order to achieve the aim of this dissertation, several instruments were designed. First, an online questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed in order to analyse whether Episcopal teenage English students enjoyed reading, in their native language or English, and why they did or did not enjoy it. As the goal of this questionnaire was to gauge the students' relationship with literature and not their proficiency in English, this questionnaire was written in Catalan so that all students could understand what was being asked. Furthermore, students were also asked if they would enjoy reading YAL in the classroom instead of classics, or if they liked the reading materials provided by the school. These questions were meant to be analysed and then used to support or not teenagers' dislike of reading, especially high-school-issued texts, and the use of contemporary novels in the classroom. Unfortunately, due to the national health issue, this questionnaire was not answered and it was not possible to reach any conclusions.

The main instrument designed to promote a positive and rewarding perspective of English literature is the literary didactic unit (see Appendix C). This unit was designed to mimic both an educative situation and a book club. The conducting thread of this unit was to make the student feel like a detective, always searching for clues and the right answer, be it from literary theory or the novel per se. The first pages were dedicated to introducing the English classic Sherlock Holmes, as well as learning about the detective fiction genre and its tropes. This general introduction to the genre and its main characteristics is often present in literature sessions in high schools so as to broaden the students' knowledge (Khatib et al., 2011). The rest of the unit is dedicated to the novel students would have to read, *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro, 2017), which offers students several pages where they can keep track of the evidence found throughout the novel and even a page to list their suspects. These pages should be filled with the information the students collect from each chapter by following the chapter review card (see Appendix D), which is meant to be used to analyse each chapter and in which students can keep track of a summary of the chapter, any new evidence or vocabulary, amongst other things, in order to provide them with a guide of what to look for when reading. Furthermore, it would also be useful as a starting point for their discussions, as some students might not feel comfortable enough to talk in front of their peers and a guide with some key aspects to discuss might help them feel more prepared, as expressed by Agustín-Llach (2007). All activities were designed in

such a way that could be attractive and interesting to the students, encouraging them to discuss their findings without expecting a simple right or wrong answer, as that is not the objective of this proposal.

Finally, after the implementation of the literary proposal, there would have been a post-questionnaire (Appendix B), written in Catalan for the sake of clarity. Said questionnaire would have been useful to gauge the students' reaction to said proposal and their opinions on literature, to see if the new experiences concerning literature have changed their perspective at all. These results would be extremely useful in order to ponder different changes needed in the unit, maybe the book choice or the activities designed, or even if it is worthy to implement again.

4.4. Procedure

Before proceeding with the unit itself, students would have been given a pre-questionnaire to gather their opinions on literature in general and on classics and contemporary novels specifically. In the first session, students would be introduced to the unit and the classic novel. For this first session, it would be interesting to start with a short group conversation in which all students could give their own opinion about reading and their habits concerning literary choices. Hence, students would have a gradual introduction to the topic and would feel part of it, as they would have had an opportunity to express their opinion. In order to maintain this gradual introduction to the unit, the first element the students would develop is their knowledge of the classics. This session would mostly revolve around the discovery of information concerning Sherlock Holmes, his stories, and other significant characters from the novels, which relates to pages three to six in the unit. This research would be conducted in pairs or groups of three and with the use of their mobile phones, which would boost students' engagement in the activity thanks to the use of technology (Trinder, 2017).

After being introduced to the classics and discussing their findings, it would be time to read and comment on *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro, 2017). The second session would be devoted to the introduction to the contemporary novel and its characters, with the students becoming detectives again. This session would be similar to previous one in the items searched, as students would have to discover some basic information about the novel and the author, analyse the main characters and then learn some theory about detective novels, in this case about their basic structure and apply it to what they think will happen in the novel. This work can be found in pages eight to ten from the unit.

The following five sessions would be devoted to the novel itself. For each session, the students should read certain chapters of the novel which would then be discussed in class. The division of the chapters was done taking into account their length as well as their content, so as to create short and meaningful reading units for each session. For the third session, the first one discussing the book, the students would have to read the first three chapters, accounting for the introduction to the novel and characters and 48 pages of length. For the fourth session, the students would have to read chapters four and five, which describe the first murder and is 36 pages long. For the fifth and longest session, students would have to read chapters six and seven, in which the second murder is discovered and the whole case explained in 56 pages. For the sixth session, students would have to read chapters eight and nine, accounting for 38 pages and where most evidences are found and explained. And for the last discussion session, students would read the remaining three chapters and the epilogue, which accounts for 41 pages.

Furthermore, each session discussing the novel has been planned following a chapter review card, in which the students must take notes while reading to discuss in class. In the didactic unit, only one card is given, as the same one can be printed for each chapter as many times as needed. This card guides the student on which elements to focus on when reading, classifying them into three categories: (1) basic information, where students should write the number of the chapter, a brief summary and whichever vocabulary they found confusing; (2) personal thoughts, where students should write down their favourite moment/s and quote/s from that chapter; and (3) investigating a crime, where students are supposed to pay attention to the crime that has been committed, the evidence found, whom they believe is the main suspect and the reason why they think so. Each of these categories represents a page from the unit, which students are supposed to fill in with their notes and comments after discussing them with their group during the session. Thus, each discussion session should start with a ten-minute conversation commenting on the general summary of the chapter, followed by a half-an-hour group discussion, in which groups of four or five would discuss the information they have written down in their chapter review card, and the session would finish with twenty minutes of general group discussion, in which each small group can give their opinion on the different aspects commented for the whole class.

These discussions are meant for the students to comment on their favourite parts, but also to discuss who they think the murderer is and why. One of the recurring elements throughout the unit is the importance of justifying one's opinion, which should also be present in the discussions. Moreover, another important aspect of the unit would be the

need to name a suspect. After each session, the teacher should write all the possible suspects named by the students and they should vote on who they think is to blame. After reading the whole book, the ones who claimed the correct murderer would become the winners, whose prize would be choosing the next book for the following book club.

Finally, the last session would be devoted to going over the whole novel. For this session, the students would use the last page of the didactic unit, which is called “final thoughts”. In this page, students should briefly write their own review of the novel, their favourite moments or characters, and their recommendation, or not, of the novel together with its strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, in this session students would be able to share their final thoughts on the novel with the whole group, and those who claimed the correct culprit would be able to name the next book club novel. Table 1 below yields a summary of the didactic unit.

Table 1: Summary of the didactic unit

Session	Duration	Aim	Materials
1	1 hour	Introduction to Sherlock Holmes	Pages 3 to 6
2	1 hour	Introduction to <i>A Study in Charlotte</i>	Pages 8 to 10
3	1 hour	Discussion of chapters 1, 2 and 3 (introduction to the story and characters).	Chapter review card
4	1 hour	Discussion of chapters 4 and 5 (first murder).	Chapter review card
5	1 hour	Discussion of chapters 6 and 7 (second murder).	Chapter review card
6	1 hour	Discussion of chapters 8 and 9 (collecting most evidence).	Chapter review card
7	1 hour	Discussion of chapters 10, 11, 12 and epilogue (discovering the culprit and reasoning).	Chapter review card
8	1 hour	Revision of the whole novel and final thoughts.	Final thoughts page

4.5. Assessment

One of the main aims of this dissertation is to make reading literature an enjoyable activity for teenage learners. In order to achieve this goal, certain changes to the usual methodology followed by many teachers when reading with literature in ELT were made.

One of these changes was the assessment. Usually, most reading units are designed with a final exam or some reading comprehension activities in mind which are often used as evidence of the student having read the text and for assessment. Nevertheless, one of the most recurrent issues with teenagers and reading is that they perceive it solely as an evaluative task rather than an enjoyable activity (Gentile & McMillan, 1980), which was an issue I intended to solve.

In order to do so, the usual assessment was dismissed and a rubric assessing their participation and work was designed (see Appendix E). The rubric was divided into four different factors: the students' completion of each chapter review card, the annotation of each section from the unit, and their participation, both in small and big groups, so as to not give a disadvantage to shy students who might find it harder to speak in front of the whole group. Moreover, each factor has different levels of attainment, depending on the student's performance, and their final mark derives from an average of their marks from all the sessions. Thus, the assessment for this unit would be based on the students' meaningful participation in the debates, and on the appropriate note-taking of the book, mainly finishing the didactic unit's activities with an acceptable degree of proficiency according to the students' level, a B2 in this case.

4.6. Justification

All the activities in this proposal were designed to directly counteract most common problems identified concerning reading habits in high school amongst teenage students. Regarding the problems mentioned in section 3.1., each activity was designed in a way so as to tackle said problems. The first issue was that teenagers associate reading with school tasks rather than an enjoyable activity. In order to counteract such beliefs, the unit has been designed as a replica to a book club, with no final exams or activities and the final mark mainly being their performance in class rather than a review or a reading comprehension activity (Harmon & Wood, 2015). Hence, at no point in the unit is there an explanation on how to write the perfect book review, as that is not the unit's aim. Furthermore, the book club methodology also tackles the issue of reading not being social, as most sessions are based on interaction amongst peers, which is often favoured by teenagers (McFerran-Skewes, 2004).

Finally, most of the remaining problems are dealt with through the book choice, a YA detective novel. Choosing a YA detective novel improves one of the biggest issues in teenage reading, the readers' need to connect to the characters and their situations, even if fictional (Sivapalan et al., 2008). Nevertheless, in this unit students are also able to learn

about the classics, or Literature, which are often held in high regard by teachers and parents, as opposed to literature (Guimarães, 2008), thus appeasing both sides. Moreover, YAL tends to use short chapters, almost always ending in a cliff hanger, which can help improve students' need for entertainment and action through their need to know more (Agustín-Llach, 2007). Incidentally, the use of a competition as conducting thread, in this case, the discovery of the murderer from the detective novel, can also be a tool to promote students' engagement and enjoyment throughout their reading experience. In conclusion, this unit could certainly help students' relationship with literature, as it tackles most issues observed throughout the decades concerning this topic and offers advantageous solutions for the students to hopefully have a long-lasting relationship with literature.

5. Conclusions

The implementation of literature in a high school classroom is often regarded as an extremely complicated feat for many reasons, namely the lack of interest in the topic and the students' refusal to read (Gentile & McMillan, 1980). Nevertheless, literature can be an extremely useful resource to teach English. Thus, the proposal in this dissertation was designed to improve students' relationship with literature following a new and engaging methodology and reading choice.

The main aim of this proposal was to promote reading amongst teenage English learners, both for the sake of reading and to improve their communication skills. In order to do so, first, teenagers' dislike for reading, both at home and at school was investigated (Agustín-Llach, 2007; Gentile & McMillan, 1980). The evidence found together with the theory on the use of literature in education inspired the designing of an innovative didactic unit focused on a contemporary literary text. Although the unit was not implemented, and thus no methodology choices made during the designing of the unit were proved to actually be beneficial for teenagers' relationship with English literature, I believe there were some items from this unit that would have been received positively by teenagers. The main ones are the text choice, as *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro, 2017) fits perfectly with what teenagers usually enjoy reading in their free time, a YA novel with mystery leading the plot, and would also please teachers and parents due to its connections to and subsequent exploration of a classic of English literature, Sherlock Holmes. Moreover, the methodology followed would also be probably appreciated by students, as the lack of an obvious evaluative task would help distance their experiences with reading from a school task,

usually considered boring by teenage students, and promote reading as an exciting experience.

Even though the main objectives of the dissertation have been fulfilled to a great extent, there is also room for improvement. One of the most problematic aspects of this unit might be the book choice. *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro, 2017), which is suitable for the Episcopal baccalaureate students' needs and likes, might not be attractive for students from other high schools with different needs and likes. Hence, the lack of motivation to read a text they would not enjoy would render this unit useless in other settings where students enjoy reading different genres. Nevertheless, it would be intriguing to broaden this unit into a fully-functioning reading program, in which students can offer some of their own book choices at the beginning of the year for the teacher to design some book club units on five of the most recurrent or popular ones, letting the students choose their own novel to read, which is one of the tenets of the book club methodology that could not be followed in this unit (Harmon & Wood, 2015).

Not surprisingly, many of the lessons learnt throughout the master's degree contributed to the unit's design. This dissertation's main aim to promote the use of YAL in ELT in high schools was driven by the master's degree subject *Complements per a la Formació de Llengües Estrangeres*. This subject expressed the importance all literary genres can have in ELT, and it specially reinforced the idea that teaching popular literary genres can be highly beneficial for students. Additionally, the choice on which methodology to follow was based on one of the many lessons of *Aprenentatge i Ensenyament de les Llengües Estrangeres*. In this subject, we learnt the importance of replicating a real reader's behaviours when confronting a text in order to design reading activities, which was one of the most decisive factors when choosing the book club methodology for this dissertation's proposal.

From a professional point of view, the designing of this reading innovation proposal has provided many tools and benefits to my knowledge and training as an English language teacher. Through the careful design of this unit, I have acquired a better understanding of the creation of a didactic unit, even if I have not been able to contrast my hypotheses of what would be useful from my unit with what actually is. Nevertheless, another lesson I have learnt from my unit that I will hopefully be able to apply to my future as a language teacher is the possibility to introduce both classics and popular novels in a classroom, keeping the positive aspects of each genre and avoiding their disadvantages, such as boredom or perceived lack of importance, respectively. All of this has contributed enormously to my development as a future high school language teacher and has helped

me realize the benefits of trying different methodologies and resources from the ones that are considered relevant or appropriate by a vast majority.

Taking into account all the evidence gathered, and to finish, I believe that this unit would have achieved its aims to a certain extent and the students would have had a great time during their reading experience, had it been implemented. Thus, it is my opinion that YAL should be considered more often when designing reading programs for teenage readers instead of being dismissed as a lesser genre of literature, as it would improve students' engagement with the novel and reading activity, which should be the main goal of teaching literature to teenage students.

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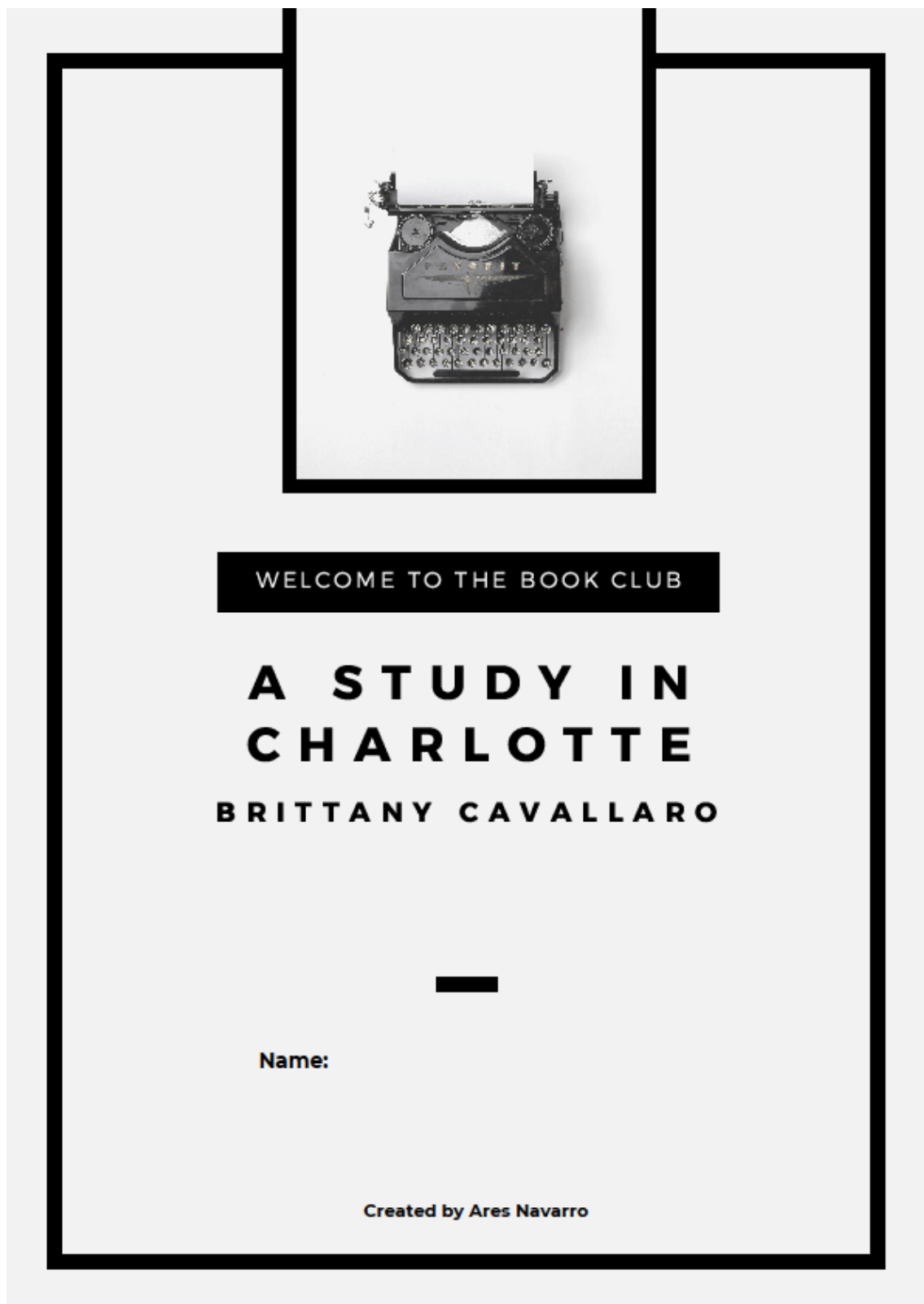
7. Appendices

Appendix A – Pre-Questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/xLghgg4CxMgw6oB47>

Appendix B – Post-Questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/p5UFVNuMoG65x5716>



WELCOME TO THE BOOK CLUB

In this book club you will discuss the popular book A Study in Charlotte by Brittany Cavallaro, which follows the story of Charlotte Holmes and Jamie Watson.

But, wait a second!

That title and those names sound familiar!

Could it be related to A Study in Scarlet by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle starring Sherlock Holmes and John Watson?!

Let's investigate, detective!



SHERLOCK HOLMES: A CLASSIC

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SHERLOCK HOLMES AND HIS BEST FRIEND JOHN WATSON?

LET'S SEE IF YOU WERE RIGHT! TRY TO GATHER AS MUCH EVIDENCE AS POSSIBLE ON THIS DETECTIVE AND HIS CREATOR. INFORMATION IS KEY TO SOLVE A MYSTERY!

Author:

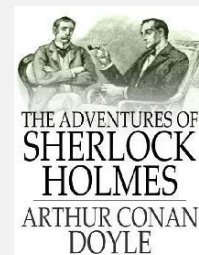
Year of publication:

Genre:

Number of stories:

Most popular stories:

Main characters:



3

SHERLOCK HOLMES: A CLASSIC

LET'S FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THESE CHARACTERS... OR SUSPECTS!
WHO ARE THEY?

NAME: *Sherlock Holmes*

AGE:

PROFESSION:

ADDRESS:

ROLE IN THE STORY:

PERSONALITY (*likes and dislikes, hobbies, problems...*):

NAME: *John Watson*

AGE:

PROFESSION:

ADDRESS:

ROLE IN THE STORY:

PERSONALITY (*likes and dislikes, hobbies, problems...*):

SHERLOCK HOLMES: A CLASSIC

LET'S FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THESE CHARACTERS... OR SUSPECTS!
WHO ARE THEY?

NAME: *James Moriarty*

AGE:

PROFESSION:

ADDRESS:

ROLE IN THE STORY:

PERSONALITY (*likes and dislikes, hobbies, problems...*):

NAME:

AGE:

PROFESSION:

ADDRESS:

ROLE IN THE STORY:

PERSONALITY (*likes and dislikes, hobbies, problems...*):

SHERLOCK HOLMES: A CLASSIC

NOW THAT YOU KNOW THE CHARACTERS IT IS TIME TO INVESTIGATE THE PLOT. WHAT IS ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S USUAL PLOT FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES?

HERE YOU HAVE A LIST WITH THE MOST TYPICAL SUBGENRES OF DETECTIVE STORIES. DO YOU KNOW THEM ALL? CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THEY ARE?

Police procedural
Historical mystery
Cozy mysteries
Serial killer mystery
Locked-room mystery

HERE YOU HAVE A LIST WITH THE MOST RELEVANT ELEMENTS IN A DETECTIVE STORY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THEM ALL? COULD YOU GIVE EXAMPLES?

1. *the seemingly perfect crime*
2. *the wrongly accused suspect*
3. *the dim-witted police*
4. *the greater powers of observation and superior mind of the detective*
5. *the less intelligent sidekick helping the detective*
6. *the startling and unexpected denouement where the culprit is revealed*

6

A MODERN RENDITION

Well done, detective!

*Now we know everything there is to know about
detective novels and the famous detective
Sherlock Holmes.*

Now it's time to learn more about this new version...

Will the characters be similar?

Will it follow the same plot?

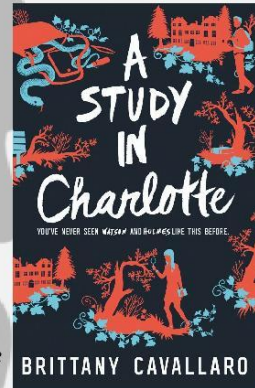
Let's find out, detective!



A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

PLOT SUMMARY

The last thing Jamie Watson wants is to go to Sherringford. Sherringford is a Connecticut prep school just an hour away from his estranged father and home to Charlotte Holmes, the famous detective's great-great-great-granddaughter, who has inherited not only Sherlock's genius but also his volatile temperament. From the moment they meet, there's a tense energy between them, and they seem more destined to be rivals than anything else. But when a Sherringford student dies under suspicious circumstances, ripped straight from the most terrifying of the Sherlock Holmes stories, Jamie and Charlotte are being framed for murder, and only Charlotte can clear their names. Danger is mounting and nowhere is safe—and the only people they can trust are each other!



BOOK DETAILS

Author:

Year of publication:

Genre:

Number in the series:

Other titles in the series:

Main characters:

Find more clues!



8

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

CHARACTERS

NAME: *Charlotte Holmes*

AGE:

PROFESSION:

ADDRESS:

ROLE IN THE STORY:

PERSONALITY (*likes and dislikes, hobbies, problems...*):

NAME: *Jaime Watson*

AGE:

PROFESSION:

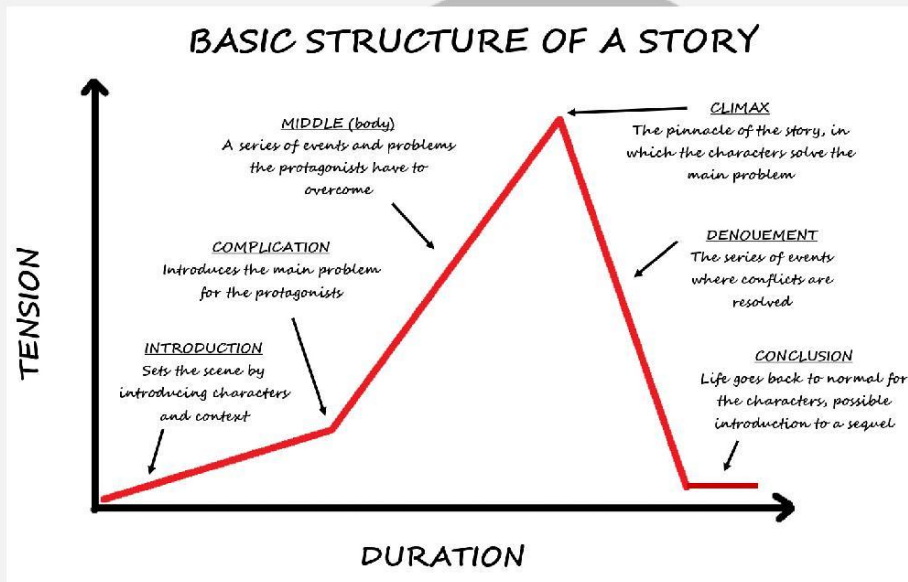
ADDRESS:

ROLE IN THE STORY:

PERSONALITY (*likes and dislikes, hobbies, problems...*):

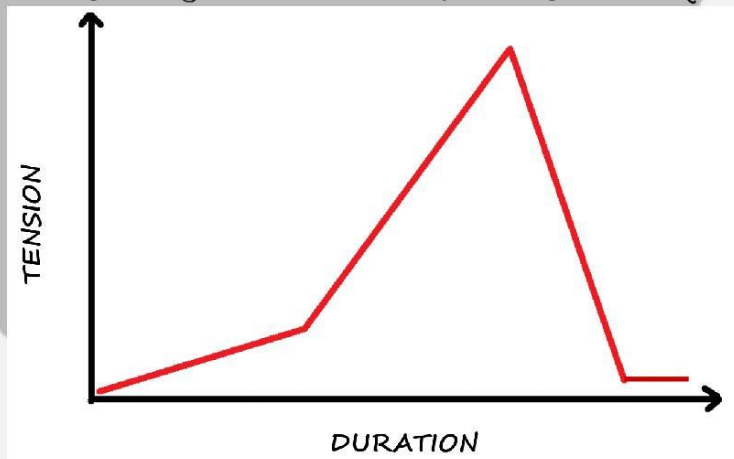
A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

A STORY'S STRUCTURE



Most stories, regardless of the genre they belong to, follow this structure. You must already know the sections introduction, body and conclusion. As you see, they have only been expanded rather than changed.

Can you image what the structure of this story will be like?

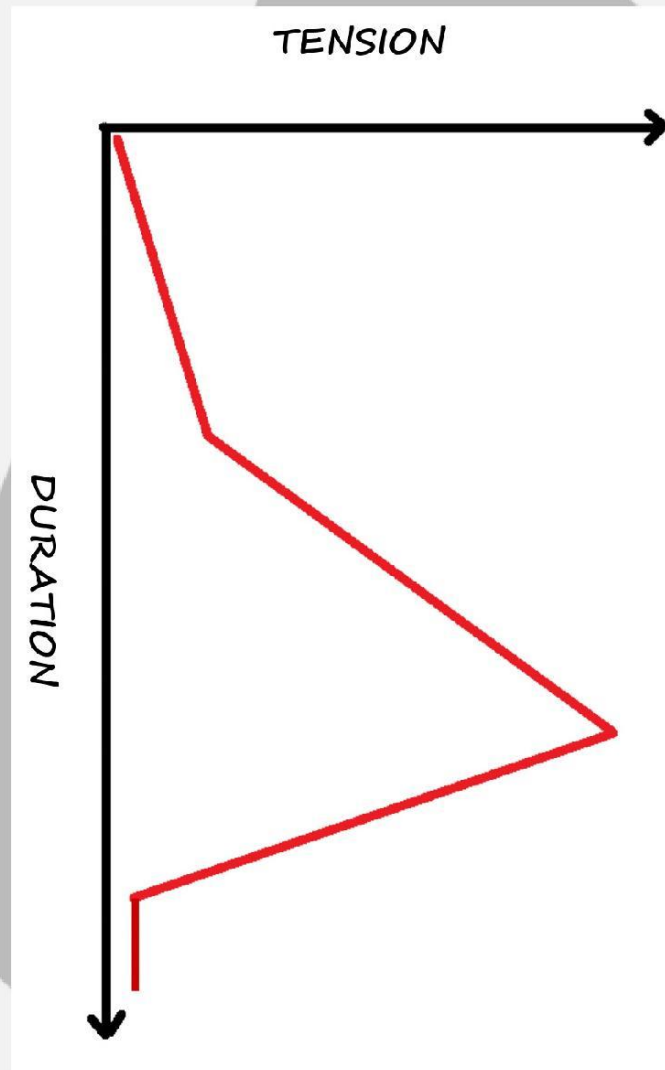


10

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE'S STRUCTURE

As you read the many chapters from the book, start identifying the main structure of the story. In order to be a good detective you must be organized, so write down your key moments from the story in this timeline.



II

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE'S STRUCTURE

Although an image is worth a thousand words, sometimes an image is not enough! If you need more space in order to explain the moments you highlighted in the previous image, use this page to write notes on the plot of the story:



I 2

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

EVIDENCE TRACKER

Again, organization is key! Be very careful when reading and write down all the clues from the committed crimes. Do they lead to any suspect? Any other evidence? Do you already know who the murderer is?

EVIDENCE	QUOTE	JUSTIFICATION / ANALYSIS

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

MAIN SUSPECTS

Detective, it's time to start pointing fingers! But we are respectable detectives, so we need evidence to do so! Here you can write who you think is guilty and why. Unfortunately, only your word isn't enough, the police need more than that, they need details... So remember to write it down and be specific!

SUSPECT #1

NAME:		
REASONS	QUOTE	JUSTIFICATION



I4

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

SUSPECT #2

NAME:		
REASONS	QUOTE	JUSTIFICATION

SUSPECT #3

NAME:		
REASONS	QUOTE	JUSTIFICATION

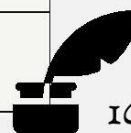


A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

VOCABULARY TRACKER

A good detective must know about many different topics, but that does not mean that they understand everything! In this page you can write those words that you didn't understand at first but now you do after having looked for their meaning (because that is what good detectives do!).

WORD	QUOTE	MEANING / EXAMPLES



A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

CONNECTIONS WITH THE CLASSIC

You must have noticed something very curious in this story... It's full of connections with the original Sherlock Holmes! Can you find them all? What do you think of these allusions to the original novels? Why do you think they are there?

ALLUSION	QUOTE	REFERENT

221B

17

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

FAVOURITE PARTS

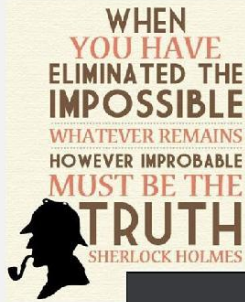
It's important to remember one's favourite parts in order to be able to comment the story, or the case, with other readers and detectives. Unfortunately, not all of us have Sherlock or Charlotte Holmes' memory... It's best you write them down... JUST IN CASE!

MOMENT	WHY?

18

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION

FAVOURITE QUOTES



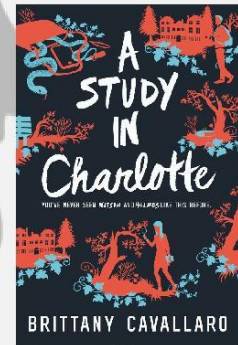
Did you know that Sherlock Holmes never uttered the words "Elementary, my dear Watson" in the original books?! We won't make the same mistake! Write down all the interesting quotes Holmes or Watson (or other characters) ACTUALLY say. Good luck, detective!

QUOTE	MEANING / REASON

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION



FINAL THOUGHTS

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STORY



FAVOURITE MOMENTS / CHARACTER

RECOMENDATION AND STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE: A RENDITION	
A CHAPTER	
BASIC INFORMATION	
CHAPTER #	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
VOCABULARY	
PERSONAL THOUGHTS	
FAVOURITE MOMENT	
FAVOURITE QUOTE	
INVESTIGATING A CRIME	
CRIME	
MORE EVIDENCE	
MAIN SUSPECT & WHY	

Appendix E – Assessment Guide

A STUDY IN CHARLOTTE ASSESSMENT

Student's name: _____

Session	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Chapter review card	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1
Annotated previous DU pages	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1
Participates in small group	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1
Participates in class	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1	/1
Total for session	/4	/4	/4	/4	/4	/4	/4	/4
Final mark	/32							

Notes:

Assessment Rubric

	1	0.5	0
Chapter review card	The student has fully and meaningfully annotated each review card of all the assigned chapters	The student has partly annotated all of the cards or has fully annotated some of the review cards for the assigned chapters	The student has partly annotated some of the review cards for the assigned chapters or has not annotated any card
Annotated previous DU pages	The student has transferred all of their findings and commentaries from the previous session to the corresponding pages	The student has transferred some of their findings and commentaries from the previous session to the corresponding pages	The student has transferred none of their findings and commentaries from the previous session to the corresponding pages
Participates in small group	The student gives their well-structured opinion and/or takes into account and responds to their classmates' comments at least 4 times and with minor mistakes (4 or less)	The student gives their well-structured opinion and/or takes into account and responds to their classmates' comments at least 2 times and with minor mistakes (2 or less)	The student only gives their opinion once, does not give their opinion, does not mention what their partners comment on and/or makes mistakes that can hinder communication
Participates in class	The student gives their well-structured and founded opinion and/or takes into account and comments on what other classmates say at least 2 times with minor mistakes (2 or less)	The student gives their well-structured and founded opinion and/or takes into account and comments on what other classmates say at least once with minor mistakes (1 or less)	The student only gives their opinion once, does not give their opinion, does not mention what their partners comment on and/or makes mistakes that can hinder communication